



# CompanyCommand



*Building Combat-Ready Teams*

**To:** Company Commanders  
**From:** CompanyCommand—your professional forum

CC is company commanders. We are in an ongoing professional conversation about leading Soldiers and building combat-ready teams. Company Commanders connect at: <http://CompanyCommand.army.mil>

## Reflexive-Fire Training— Taking Marksmanship to a New Level

*Every Soldier in our Army must be able to close with and destroy the enemy. If we aren't able to hit what we shoot at under all conditions in combat, we will not be successful, and we will sustain casualties.*

During the last few years, leaders across the Army have dramatically improved the way we train marksmanship—taking it to an entirely new level. It is pretty remarkable when you stop to think about how far we've come. Units that previously conducted only basic marksmanship ranges are now training their Soldiers in advanced skills such as reflexive fire. Our ability to be on the cutting edge when it comes to competence with our weapon systems is significantly tied to how well we share with each other what we are experiencing and learning. In this regard, company commanders are indeed spurring each other on by sharing with each other what they are learning about marksmanship.

Company commanders are connecting in conversations like this via <http://CompanyCommand.army.mil>, their professional forum. If you are a company commander, or you are a currently commissioned officer who is preparing for command, please join the conversation by requesting an account.



*From front to rear, Sgt. Dalton, Sgt. Perez, PFC Curtis and Lt. DiCaprio from A/312 MI, 1st Cavalry Division, conduct reflexive-fire training in Baghdad. Lt. DiCaprio is calling out commands. Each magazine is loaded with 7 to 12 rounds, forcing the firers to reload without warning. Sgt. Dalton is coacing Sgt. Perez.*

Photographs provided by CompanyCommand

### Proficiency Increases Confidence

by Jerry Diamond—Iraq  
(A/312th MI, Ft. Hood)

We started with the basics to include re-zeroing and basic qualification with lots of rounds to build confidence. Then we stepped up the training and worked on reflexive-fire techniques, from hammer drills to failure drills, to reloading and clear-

ing weapons failures. Before any of my Soldiers fired a live round, they practiced for a week. They were sore, and their hands were calloused, but they had become very proficient in the techniques.

Once I was comfortable with our Soldiers' reflexive-fire techniques, we integrated individual and team movement into the drill. We rehearsed breaking contact while firing live rounds, mounting a truck, and letting the gunner finish off the target set with bursts from his M249.

I have a great XO who recruited help from guys who'd worked on SWAT teams and SF teams to help with the training. The effect was phenomenal. Morale has improved dramatically, as the Soldiers regained confidence in their weapons. Their interaction with the local population has improved subsequently as well. Their increased confidence gives them a significantly more professional demeanor, which is noticed by the local nationals. As a result, our effectiveness collecting HUMINT on the ground has improved because we took the time to conduct realistic training at the range [in Iraq].

### **Zero All Components**

**by Ryan Morgan—Iraq**

(C and HHC/2-502 IN, Ft. Campbell)

I'd like to reinforce the importance of spending quality time on the zero range. Make sure that all of your CCOs, iron sights, lasers, borelights, etc., are zeroed and tied down. Zero the iron sight, then CCO, then the lasers. Everything that a good marksmanship program is based on is the zero. The CCO is the critical piece of equipment for CQB. If you want to have success in your reflexive-fire training, you have to have a solid zero. Finally, the NCOs in my old BN changed the way the weapons racks held the weapons. After the new cages were built, we were able to store the weapons in the arms room with all of these items attached.

### **First Train the Fundamentals**

**by Sean McWilliams—Iraq**

(A and HHC/1-13 AR, Ft. Riley)

I would caution against jumping right into reflexive-fire training without first training the fundamentals of marksmanship. We tried that and wound up wasting time because Soldiers had forgotten the basics. A big plus for Soldiers, we have found, is the use of the M68 close combat optic. It takes a while to zero, but once we got it dead on, we saw a significant increase in scores and Soldier confidence.

To maximize range time, I would get a range where you can zero, shoot the alternate qualification (alt c) and do reflex fire. The increase in lethality is impressive, but more so

is the increase in Soldiers' confidence and spirit, making for an overall more effective unit.

### **Don't Rush to Advanced Marksmanship**

**by Mike Dinesman—Iraq**

(A/USACAS, Ft. Bliss)

My only suggestion would be to CLOSELY scrutinize Basic Marksmanship scores prior to attempting Advanced Marksmanship. It may be that it is more worth your time and the bullets to enhance the basic skills than to stam-pede to advanced marksmanship. I see this happen day in and day out, with lackluster results. The Soldiers enjoy advanced marksmanship—it is fun, and it is different. But if they are not grouping well in SRM, have you really accomplished much with those bullets? Too often the targets I see [from units training for deployment at Ft. Bliss] have groupings the size of a trashcan lid.

### **Spend Most of Your Time Grouping**

**by Rob Griggs—Afghanistan and Iraq**

(C/2-504 PIR, Ft. Bragg)

The only thing I will add is to be able to differentiate between grouping and zeroing. Spend most of your time on grouping. Your Soldiers must be able to group—BRM or CQM. Any distance, any position. Zeroing is the mechanical manipulation of the group to a specific point on the target. We too often check that "zeroed" block because we put 5 out of 6 in a small circle. Make the training quantifiable by making your Soldiers shoot 10 groups of 5 shots from a particular distance in a particular stance, and then move on. Mike D was on the right track. Set up training that sets the bar high to make sure your Soldiers are ready to put two in the chest when they pull the trigger.

### **Train with Multiple Weapons**

**by Will Mckannan—Iraq**

(630th MP CO, Germany)

I wholeheartedly agree with all comments. One advanced part of reflexive-fire training that is often left out is using multiple weapons systems. For example, develop scenarios with live rounds, where the Soldier is forced to switch from one weapon system to another and effectively engage the target. There have been several situations where my Soldiers have had to drop their crew served and switch to an M9 or M4 to engage the enemy. If I had not done this in training, their reactions would have been slower and the engagement could have turned out worse. Instead they reacted instinctively and repelled enemy attacks.





*A basic combat-training soldier at Ft. Knox, Ky., is introduced to reflexive-fire marksmanship in February 2005.*

### **Add Uncertainty to Transitioning Weapons**

**by Ryan Kranc—Iraq**

(Future Cdr, 3 ACR, Ft. Carson)

A good method on reflexive-fire training is to randomly load M4 mags, not telling the Soldiers how many rounds are in the magazine. Once they hear a “click,” they transition to the M9 and finish out an engagement. Works well on a flat range with paper targets, but can also be done on an M9 range if you get Range Control approval to use both ammo types.

### **Use the EST to Save Ammo**

**by James Greer—Bosnia, Iraq**

(Eli-b CAV and HHC/1-68 AR)

Another training tool is the EST 2000 (Engagement Skills Trainer), which many posts and units currently have. The EST has a wide variety of scenarios that enable individuals or small units (up to squad) to train in Quick Fire, Reflexive Fire and making Shoot/Don't Shoot Decisions. The system uses the actual weapons (adapted to interface with the scenario) so Soldiers train on the weapons they will employ (not a simulated system). At Ft. Knox, we train tankers on M4s, and scouts, mechanics and basic trainees on M16A2/A4, all in the EST. The great advantage for reflexive-fire training using the EST is that you can execute unlimited reps with immediate feedback and without using up ammo.

### **Develop Realistic Situations**

**by Michael Bromund**

(523rd MP Det, Ft. Riley)

One of the best things we have done is to use the M4 and fire the MP Qualification Course found in *FM 19-10*. *FM 3-19.11* has some great drills, too. The MPQC involves shooting and moving while firing at E type targets. The FM allows over 7 minutes to complete the course, but by introducing competition between firers, I have seen Soldiers fire 50 out of 50 in under 1:30.

It's good because it incorporates one-handed firing (imagine yourself wounded), weak handed firing, and firing around barricades (vehicles can easily be driven on ranges, too). The FM doesn't specify to move forward or backward, so it can easily be situationally developed (e.g., conduct a hasty attack, break contact).

### **Keep Training Once In Country**

**by Chanda Mofu—Iraq**

(B/1-6 IN, Germany)

Concur with previous responses. I want to reinforce one thing: After your unit is in country, continue Advanced Rifle Marksmanship training in your FOB if at all possible. Your Soldiers' muscle memory will go away after leaving Kuwait if you don't keep working it. Good luck.

*These excerpts, pulled from a conversation in the CC Forum, are published here with the express approval of the contributors. If you would like to share your personal experience and ideas about marksmanship training, please include the word “Marksmanship” in the subject line and send it directly to the CC team at: CoCmd.Team@us.army.mil.*